

What is Noble?

“Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God, the Lord is one: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength” (Mark 12:29-30). What a noble attitude, a noble position, to be highly prized among those who “seek the things that are above” (Colossians 3:1)!

There are numerous temporal advancements or conditions that mankind finds to be noble, but the question must be asked (whether the question relates to temporal or eternal matters), “By what standard is any noble pursuit to be judged?” Is it by a simple statement of a perceived individual belief, or is the manifestation of the belief validated by action? James said, concerning the eternal, “Ye see that by works a man is justified, and not only by faith.” How is that so? James further explains, “Thou seest that faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect” (James 2:22, 24). From these verses we can readily see that an unchallenged, unproven faith, is simply that: unproven.

The Apostle Paul’s faith was proven in a most dramatic fashion. It is true that Paul was stoned, imprisoned, shipwrecked, and endured numerous trials. However, we want to focus on one event that will try one’s faith in any and every generation.

When the Apostle Paul had come to Jerusalem, there were there present Jews from Asia that knew of Paul’s work among the Gentiles. The Jews rose up, saying, “This is the man that teacheth all men everywhere against the people, and the law, and this place; and moreover he brought Greeks also into the temple, and hath defiled the holy place.” As a result, “all the city was moved, and the people ran together; and they laid hold on Paul, and dragged him out of the temple,” and “they were seeking to kill him” (Acts 21:27-28, 30-31). It was to this crowd the Apostle Paul had audience, saying, “I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city, at the feet of Gamaliel, instructed according to the strict manner of the law of our fathers, being zealous for God, even as ye are this day” (Acts 22:3). When coupling the details of Paul’s defense in Acts 22 with his statement to the Philippians, saying, he was “circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; as touching zeal, persecuting the church; as touching the righteousness which is in the law, found blameless” (Philippians 3:6), the Apostle Paul focuses on a great trial that is alive in every generation, and applicable to every individual seeking salvation in Christ Jesus, saying, “Howbeit what things were gain to me, these have I counted loss for Christ. Yea verily, and I count all things to

be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I suffered the loss of all things and do count them but refuse, that I may gain Christ” (Philippians 3:7-8).

The trial of which we speak is the one of a loss of family and all or any temporal advantages. It is one thing to say, “I love God with all of my heart, mind, soul, and strength,” but entirely a different matter when my doctrine and practices of life are framed by and compared to a history of family beliefs and practices, before considering what the Lord says.

Every man has an intellect that reasons concerning the things of God. The scriptures are read and re-read and an understanding of what the Holy Spirit revealed permeates the thinking and then a mental process begins to compare what has been learned by what is known about what the family has believed and practiced for years, decades, or centuries. The process begins to reason, “Is what was previously believed and practiced from heaven, or from men?” (as was the case with the Jews regarding the baptism of John, Matthew 21:25-26). Many, as did the Jews, begin to reason within themselves, saying, “If we shall say, from heaven; he will say unto us, Why then did ye not believe him. But if we shall say, from men; we fear the multitude.”

The term “multitude” could just as easily be rendered, in our society, “family.” If we shall say that the belief and practice is “from men,” recognizing that such is not from God, then a danger of family rejection, and/or retribution is bound to follow. Jesus said, “If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments” (John 14:15): it is that simple.

Jesus said, “Think not that I came to send peace on the earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I came to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law: and a man’s foes shall be they of his own household” (Matthew 10:34-36). Are you more afraid of your family than you are of God? If you lean in that direction, remember also, “It’s a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (Hebrews 10:31). ret